BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.00pm 8 SEPTEMBER 2026

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair) Cattell (Deputy Chair), Earthey, Goddard, Lademacher, Meadows, Sykes, Loughran, Winder and Parrott

Other Members present: Vic Borrill (CVS), Anusree Biswas (BRM), George Woodhams (YC), Bernadette Kent (OPC)

PART ONE

16 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1. Procedural Business

1a Declarations of substitutions:

Cllr Mark Earthey attended as substitute for Cllr Fishleigh
Cllr Liz Loughran attended as substitute for Cllr Gary Wilkinson
Cllr Sam Parrott attended as substitute for the vacant Labour seat
Anusree Biswas was invited to attend this meeting as Nora Mzaoui was unavailable

1b Declarations of interest:

Cllr Cattell declared that she is a member of the Planning Members Working Group.

1c Exclusion of the press and public

There were no Part Two items so the press and public were not excluded.

17 MINUTES

2.1 **RESOLVED–**

2.1.1 That the minutes of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Meeting on 22nd July were approved
2.1.2 That the minutes of the Call-in Meeting of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 28th July were approved

18 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION

3.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

We have some new representatives joining us today who I would like to welcome and introduce to the committee. We have Vic Borrill as our new rep for the community voluntary sector and Nora Mzaoui has taken up the new co-optee position of Black and Racially Minoritised representative. However, she is unable to attend today so Anusree is here as a substitute.

Today we have three items on the agenda. We will start with a discussion on City Plan focussed on balancing homes and employment land. Any comments from this discussion will be used to inform the development of the City Plan and help shape future engagement plans on this topic.

Following that, we have a presentation on recycling and behaviour change, looking at the steps taken so far to increase recycling rates and improve the service. We will discuss the impact of this work and the plans to maintain progress and tackle the remaining challenges.

Finally, we will look at the Memorials Policy, which was originally presented to this committee in March. Since then, changes have been made following feedback from Place O&S Committee, and we will be looking at those changes today.

Before we begin, I wanted to provide an update on the Government's plans for short-term lets, following the recommendations made by our first Task & Finish Group in 2024.

Lisa Nandy MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has announced that the Government is accelerating the introduction of a mandatory registration scheme for short-term lets, which is currently expected to be rolled out in March 2027.

Under the scheme, owners of short-term lets will be required to register their accommodation, provide key information about the property, pay a registration fee and obtain a registration number. This number must then be displayed when advertising or letting the accommodation.

One of the recommendations from our Task & Finish Group was to lobby Government on this issue, which we did, so it is encouraging to hear that the scheme is progressing and is expected to become operational next year.

19 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

4.1 There were no public engagement items.

20 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

5.1 There were no member questions.

21 CITY PLAN: BALANCING HOMES AND EMPLOYMENT LAND

21.1 Cllr Jacob Taylor presented the slides and explained the tension between allocating land in the city for housing and employment spaces. Key points included that the target of 2,500 homes per year has never been achieved and that the city plays a regionally significant role in providing office space. There is a two-tier office market, with a large stock of older, lower-quality office accommodation alongside strong demand for newer, modern space. Much of the under-occupied office space does not meet current business requirements. Many businesses operating in light industrial premises are unable to expand as they would like. While the overall amount of available space has not declined significantly, demand remains high. Potential regional solutions may emerge through the Prosperity Strategy being developed by the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority, which is intended to help shape future thinking on land use, including opportunities to meet some light industrial needs outside the city boundary, supported by improved transport links.

21.2 Max Woodford added that this isn't an issue that is unique to this City Plan and that space in the city is constrained. There are sites in the old coal yard by Hove station and the Sackville Trading Estate that can be developed. There are 564 new homes in the city with 300 council houses. The industrial units are on a long lease, where the council retains the freehold, and some of these units need modernising. Following the closure of New England House, there is a need to look at existing office space for creative industries.

21.3 Nicola Hurley said that the question being asked today is whether to keep these sites as protected employment land and to look at the policy approaches being presented. She mentioned that some heavy industrial use does not mix well with housing.

21.4 Cllr Meadows asked about developers building purpose-built student accommodation which isn't taken into account as part of the housing target and that the universities are struggling to attract more students. Nicola Hurley said that sites are allocated specifically for student accommodation and residential housing. Different models are coming forward including co-living schemes, build to rent, and the more traditional build to buy. Cllr Taylor said the building of student accommodation is not always popular but there is evidence it has led to less pressure on residential areas. The council are buying back HMOs and developers report that there is a significant decrease in demand for student accommodation. They are looking to allocate more sites for permanent residential housing and industrial land. Cllr Meadows added that the council should be lobbying to turn some of the student accommodation sites into residential as many are in prime spots and residents are concerned that a lot of them are half full, they have not reduced the number of HMOs and that they are not needed since the universities are losing students. Nicola Hurley said that the developer can approach them to change the use of the property and that they will be looking into this as part of the new City Plan. Cllr Evans added that once a premises has been built, it is difficult to change its use. Students have reported that they live in HMOs because the purpose-built student accommodation is too expensive. If the developers reduced the rent, there might be higher occupancy.

21.5 Cllr Meadows asked about the assessment of office space considering the change in habits with more people hot desking and working from home and whether this changes

the amount of space needed. Perhaps the older office stock could be used for something else including student accommodation. She added that green open spaces should never be built on.

21.6 Cllr Sykes said he was in favour of safeguarding industrial land. Whereas housing targets are set nationally, the assessment of need for industrial land is based on local analysis and demand. He asked if the flexibility in permitted development is skewing use plans with office space and light industrial space changing to housing which is treated as the priority. He asked how realistic the housing targets are and the need for a focus on social and affordable housing. There is also the issue of large numbers of short-term lets being used instead of residential homes. Cllr Taylor said the government is making progress on short-term lets and that there are 4000 properties being advertised and a high concentration of them in the city. These numbers need to come down with some properties turned into permanent residential use. Data suggests that the council has underbuilt and has a low number of dwellings for the population. However, this could be an ownership issue rather than a supply issue. There are high levels of second homes and short-term lets, which could be bought back for residential use. Affordability would remain high as there is a high demand to live in the city and a need for more social housing. Nicola Hurley said there has been a reduction of office space through permitted development which is why there is an Article 4 in place for central areas such as Western Road, to protect these spaces. Cllr Sykes added that industrial space should be safeguarded because it affects local supply chains and local jobs.

21.7 Cllr Loughran noted that land use is influenced by factors such as availability, accessibility and place-making considerations for housing, and therefore should not be considered in isolation. She asked whether these factors had been taken into account when assessing the identified sites. She agreed that they need to coordinate the provision of both types of land uses with the regional economy and this relates to affordability. If too much land is released for market housing it would drive up the cost. There is a need to build housing quickly so there is a need to consider modular housing. This would require the development of a new policy framework, alongside the planning of transport infrastructure to support both large sites on the edge of the city and developments within the city centre. There are physical challenges to consider such as tiny streets where HGV vehicles can get stuck doing deliveries. Cllr Loughran said maintaining the existing sites is important, but that safeguarded employment land could be released with the caveat that they will look at how mixed uses could work. Industrial space could be re-provided in other locations and tie in with the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority. Older office space could be converted into homes. There are a lot of empty properties in the London Road area which could be used for residential as they are unlikely to be turned back into retail. London Road is a key area for the city centre and it needs regeneration. Cllr Taylor said they would look at a modular house building policy. He said that land prices are really high due to construction costs. Granting more social housing rather than market housing could stabilise the affordability issue. He agreed that transport is important and the old Victorian roads can be problematic. Mixed use developments have had limited success with the retail element. Max Woodford said that having flexibility for the ground floor of residential blocks has not worked and this needs to be looked at.

21.8 Cllr Cattell asked about the Article 4 direction which stops offices being turned into housing and whether this has affected the local market and increased vacant office

space. Should this be revised? She said that construction is expensive but there is also a lack of trade people as young people are not learning these skills and those in the industry are getting older. She asked whether there is a way to resist shared ownership schemes. Max Woodford said the Article 4 doesn't ban the change of use but controls it but there might be a need for more flexible policies. The Met College has opened a training centre teaching young people how to fit heat pumps. Affordable rented housing is prioritised over shared ownership.

21.9 Cllr Lademacher was in favour of modular housing and mentioned the "Hope Rise" Scheme in Bristol that was 100% social rental. In terms of affordability, she asked what proportion of homes are expected to be social rent and genuinely affordable and are they meeting that need. Cllr Lademacher asked about how the balance of housing and employment land would have an effect on communities with protected characteristics. Cllr Taylor agreed that modular housing will be part of the solution. Affordable housing is achieved through setting policies and taking contributions from other sites to have the funds for the council to do its own buying or building. The council has its own programme of social housing where they are trying to get as many new builds as possible, some through the buy back programme where they have already bought 500 properties and use it for a mix of rental and temporary accommodation. The city has constrained land bounded by the South Downs National Park which makes it difficult to meet the housing needs. Nicola Hurley said that the whole City Plan will go through an equalities assessment and a viability assessment as they progress through the process.

21.10 Cllr Winder asked whether the council fully understood the factors contributing to the housing crisis and was taking account of the significant changes that have occurred in recent years, including increased home working, population movements out of the city, and the challenge of accommodating the housing and industrial space required. The council needs to look back in order to understand the future better and what the city really needs. Cllr Taylor said that statistics exist that evidence the changing profile of the use of land. Max Woodford said that part of the City Plan is to set a vision and then develop policies to deliver it.

21.11 George Woodhams asked about the need for young people to have the use of industrial land to develop skills such as carpentry. Cllr Taylor said that employment land and housing effects everyone but particularly the younger generation who are facing difficult prospects including employability and housing affordability. It's taking young people longer to leave the parental home and can only afford to pay their rent and aren't able to save for a housing deposit. Young people are at the front and centre of this plan.

21.12 Anusree Biswas asked how the council are assessing the social and financial impact of losing employment land against the benefits of increased housing and how they will involve the voluntary sector. Cllr Taylor said they assess it through underlying studies for the needs of employment and housing land and try to strike a balance between all of them. They need to consider the housing crisis as a priority but not all the land can be used for housing because the city needs everything else such as health facilities and education provision. They are keen to engage with the voluntary sector and there are key stages of engagement and consultation in the City Plan timeline where they will involve the sector.

21.13 Vic Borrill said it was good that creative spaces were being considered in the City Plan but that it could be expanded to include designated spaces for communities and social enterprises where people can go to gain skills and confidence to join the workforce. It's about engaging with the right people in the sector in the early design. Max Woodford said planners look at use rather than users but the community voluntary sector might want a slightly different kind of workspace and for her to get in touch about this.

21.14 Cllr Goddard said it doesn't need to be "either" or "or" for housing and employment land and to be more creative around the "and". They brought Moulsecoomb Place back to life with a creative set of studios and it's good to innovate and just get on with it. The council processes can be a blocker and need to be more of a catalyst for bringing empty areas back to use. BHT used shipping containers to offer short term rental accommodation to people and it's beneficial to encourage small communities to get together and build housing. Cllr Taylor agreed but said that often a site has gained consent for a particular use and it's not usually the community who request a change but developers who want to build something else that will make more money.

21.15 Bernadette Kent asked about how the over 60s are being considered as they are the fastest growing demographic. Cllr Taylor said the full City Plan will go through the EIA process which will include impacts on older people.

21.16 Cllr Evans asked about the new national policy framework and how it has sped the process up. Nicola Hurley said there is a new framework and new regulations on how the plan is created. It is a much shorter timeline compared to the previous process, although it will still take 30 months. The scope has been reduced so there are less things to consider. The next gateway is a self-assessment in October. Many of the policies are covered nationally so they are able to focus on things local to the city such as employment and the visitor economy.

21.17 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee members agreed that they had had a thorough discussion on the City Plan and contributed to the development process.

22 RECYCLING AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

22.1 Cllr Tim Rowkins presented the slides. Key points included: the highest recycling rate for the city was achieved in March 2026, an acknowledgement that residents need to have faith in what happens to the materials to be more willing to recycle properly, that cartons and foil will soon be accepted in mixed recycling collections, a waste composition analysis is undertaken every 2 years, contamination is a problem they are focussing on, leaflets with information on recycling will be circulated to all households, signage on communal bins are being replaced and they would like to introduce targeted messaging via email to specific households with contaminated recycling. The colour of the bins is contrary to surrounding areas which is confusing particularly to students who come from elsewhere and are used to them being the other way around. Most contamination comes from household rubbish in the recycling bin or the recycling being bagged up in a bin liner that cannot be recycled. There is a focus on communications and behaviour change.

22.2 Cllr Sykes asked why the energy recovery rate has declined. Residents from his ward have commented that it is easier to put items into the waste bins because they have a

larger opening and are bigger, that the charity bins collecting clothing are often overflowing, and that gatherings of communal bins don't look nice and more thought needs to be given to their location as they can be a detriment to retail and businesses. Cllr Rowkins said that the 3200 litre waste bins take up less space on the road in comparison to three 1100 litre bins but they need a specialist vehicle to lift them, which are unfortunately prone to problems. They only have 5 of these vehicles which are unreliable; there are also issues with the bin lift mechanisms, all of which have an impact on the city. Any vehicle can lift the 1100 litre bins. They are colour coding the bins to make it more obvious which does what and changing the signage to be on top rather than at waist height where they are less visible. It was noted that the council does not collect textile bins directly, as these are managed through an external contract. Textile recycling is in decline, with companies experiencing difficulties in maintaining collection services. Bin placement is important as it does have an impact on the look and feel of the city. Satti Sidhu added that the energy recovery rates refer to waste being incinerated at Newhaven which is decreasing because food waste is going to a composting facility instead, so there is less being incinerated.

22.3 Cllr Meadows said that in Patcham the recycling was collected but not the glass which meant they had to wait a month until the next one; she was concerned about communication with residents and that residents were unable to report a problem on the website and are frustrated. Cllr Rowkins said the website is working fine for reporting and that once an issue has been logged on the website it cannot be logged again. However, he acknowledged that this could be better communicated to residents and made clearer on the website. Cllr Rowkins explained that recycling collections are done by twin pack vehicles that collect 2 different waste streams at the same time, allowing the materials to be kept separate. Unfortunately, these vehicles are old and have mechanical problems. This results in crews going out in a standard vehicle and only collecting mixed recycling because it can cause more of a nuisance than glass in terms of being blown around. Fortunately, there are 10 more vehicles arriving. Ali McManamon said that the key issue is vehicle reliability, and a properly resourced vehicle replacement strategy is coming into place now.

22.4 Anusree Biswas said that in society we use a huge amount of plastic and it would be good to reduce its use. Other countries have deposit return schemes where people can bring glass back to the shop and get money back for it. She also mentioned the Climate for Communities Partnership and that they should be involved in the conversation. Cllr Rowkins said there is a deposit return scheme coming in 2027 although it's not going to include glass. The Communities Partnership is a good idea as the council needs to work closer with groups in the city as they often are too reliant on their own comms.

22.5 Cllr Evans said some supermarkets have recycling bins for soft plastic such as crisp packets and cling wraps but that plastic packaging is gratuitous with organic vegetables often being the worst.

22.6 Vic Borrill said it would be valuable to communicate to residents via community groups especially if English isn't their first language because this kind of information could be hard to follow. There is also an opportunity to promote reuse options, free shops and composting. Cllr Rowkins said they do promote these services on the website and that the city has an above average number of reuse schemes but most people are not aware of them.

22.7 Cllr Winder asked if communal bins would be kept and said that some older people are unable to carry rubbish bags and find it difficult to manage the bins. Cllr Rowkins said there are no plans to get rid of communal bins as they are useful, particularly in very narrow streets to keep the pavement uncluttered especially for those using wheelchairs or buggies. There is a concern that communal bins encourage fly tipping which is a problem. In response to this, they have reduced the fee to remove bulky waste and are considering “skip days” in certain areas but it does need a more fully formed policy. Cllr Rowkins said they do offer an assisted collections service to those who need it where a crew member will go to the door and take the rubbish. Communal bins work well if not placed outside someone’s house and choosing location can be difficult. Some areas are requesting communal bins, and they will work with residents on implementing this.

22.8 Cllr Goddard said that a key challenge was to normalise the idea that everyone has a role to play in maintaining the city's appearance. He suggested that communal recycling could be promoted through messaging that emphasises individual responsibility for keeping the city looking its best. He recommended looking externally to think tanks and organisations based in the city to explore more modern and effective methods of communication. The bins themselves don’t look good and it would be nice to paint them or have a children’s art competition. The comms message should be around civic pride. Cllr Rowkins said that the age of the fleet is the main problem, that vehicles should only be used until they are 10 years old whereas there are 17 vehicles in the fleet that are over 10 years old and that these can’t be replaced overnight. They want to work with the community on the message of civic pride because the council has limited finances and can’t do everything alone. They used a consultancy firm to help with the food waste messaging to maximise uptake which was successful and there is value in external expertise. They have had conversations about underground bins which look better, and they have been talking to Liverpool council who are running a trial. They are expensive and the city’s Victorian sewers could be a problem. They plan to have mobile street crews on “skip days” and time it with typical move dates for students in HMOs.

22.9 Cllr Parrott said that more flexibility could be beneficial as some people might produce less waste than others and be happy with fewer bin collections and big families might appreciate having more. She said that other cities don’t use individual bins but have big pink sacks that seem to work well. It would be nice to wrap the communal bins with artist’s work and the Book Bench trail demonstrates the talent in the city. There are lots of converted houses in the city where each flat has its own bin which creates clutter and not all of the bins are full. Cllr Rowkins said the flexibility idea might over-complicate the round design. Residents can choose not to put their bins out if they don’t need to. Satti Sidhu added that there was a trial in the city for the pink sacks but crews were not able to collect them safely. Cllr Rowkins said they will look into it. Ali McManamon said that some places do wrap their bins in art and the council is currently developing a Graffiti Strategy where this could be included. Cllr Rowkins said it was an aspiration, but it was important to get the basics working first.

22.10 George Woodhams said it would be good to get the information campaign out to schools, colleges and universities and could deliver posters and attend assemblies. The colour of the individual bins in Brighton are the opposite of those in neighbouring areas which doesn’t help with contamination. Cllr Rowkins said they need to do more work with the universities and that they do attend Fresher’s Fair although this may not be the

best time to try and engage students. They want to engage with letting agents so that recycling information is in the property when students move in. Primary and Secondary schools play an important part as children can educate their parents on topics like this. He will discuss this with the Schools Team.

22.11 Cllr Loughran was surprised that the rounds review had not taken place for such a long time, she said that underground recycling bins in Europe are very successful and solve the problem of bins being in poor condition and looking bad. In the winter, there are often strong winds that blow recycling around if the bins are overflowing and questioned whether individual bins could be designed in a way to stop this. She asked if a glass has smashed, should residents put it in a bag for safety reasons. Cllr Rowkins said the round review is really needed and the new technology gives a more agile set of boundaries. Wind is an issue and some people still have the old black boxes which are being phased out. He is often approached by bin manufacturers selling new bin designs and some food waste bins have been redesigned to stop foxes getting into them. It is correct to wrap smashed glass in a protective bag for safety reasons and that he uses newspaper.

22.12 RESOLVED – that the report is noted.

23 MEMORIALS POLICY

23.1 Cllr Jacob Allen presented the slides. Key points included: the Memorials Policy first came to Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2026 where it was given robust scrutiny and the feedback informed the subsequent changes; they are trying to fix the issues of governance and consistency in relation to memorials balancing the emotion of remembrance and grief with the duties of management of the public realm. They are meeting legal and planning issues and giving it political accountability. Cllr Allen has met with opposition councillors on a one-to-one basis to get their feedback.

23.2 Cllr Meadows asked about the application process taking 8 weeks and what happens if the memorial is already up before putting in the application as it would then be there for a longer period. She asked about annual memorials such as in Wild Park for the girls who were killed there and whether that kind of memorial is classed as spontaneous or historically significant. Cllr Allen said that example is historically significant as it is a similar situation to laying wreaths every year at the war memorial; they know to expect it and so it doesn't need to be covered by the policy. Ian Baird said that the 8 weeks is the initial response time for applications for permanent memorials that will be in the city for a more significant amount of time.

23.3 Cllr Winder asked how this policy aligns with the process of people donating trees and benches, and also, the Blue Plaque process. Cllr Assaduzzaman tried to get a bench to remember those who died during Covid which was approved by City Parks but has not

progressed. Having a Covid memorial at the hospital is not appropriate. She asked whether cemeteries would be better used for plaques. Cllr Allen said the cemeteries provide a valuable quiet space and the policy was amended to signpost people to use these spaces more and they continue to promote the cemetery for this. Covid memorials would have to go through this process but tree donations go through the Tree Trust Fund. There is often a delay for this as trees can only be planted during the correct season. Benches would need to go through this process to be in agreed locations having considered accessibility and approved wording. The policy aims to make it easier for residents to understand. Ian Baird said the established processes for trees and benches will continue. The Bereavement Services Team has been restructured to include specific staff looking to expand the use of cemeteries. Cllr Allen said that the donation of trees needs to complement the strategic aims and it is difficult to predict the demand. There are lots of space for new trees in East Brighton Park but people want to plant them in more crowded places like St Anns Wells Gardens. Ali McManamon added that there is a separate process for people who want to donate trees purely to increase tree coverage in the city.

23.4 Cllr Parrott asked whether tree donations were only for parks or whether they can go on the streets as a resident in her ward wanted a tree planted outside her late father's house. She said that memorials can be used for military and political figures and often pushed by those with loud voices, how will the team balance this to reflect and include more disadvantaged communities such as LGBTQ and women who may also want memorials. Cllr Allen said there are 2 statues of women in the city and they are both of Queen Victoria, most others are monarchs. It's down to political leaders to push for new and different statues and make them household names. Ali McManamon confirmed that street trees can be donated but it includes the cost of the tree pit and any works needed to fix the pavement after installation, so the cost is significantly higher than in a park.

23.5 Cllr Earthey said he was greatly in favour of a peace park or some centralised area to be a designated safe place for people to remember their dead however they died and to leave political beliefs aside. These areas should be policed to ensure that they remain a safe place as there are strong community tensions around some memorials.

23.6 Cllr Loughran said the policy was sensitively thought through, and she agreed with the 28 days. The policy guidance needs to make the difference between a temporary and permanent memorial clearer and which bit relates specifically to the applicant. Cllr Allen said that they wouldn't send out the hefty document to residents, it would be a more digestible version and targeted to their ask.

23.7 RESOLVED – that the report is noted

The meeting concluded at 7.52pm

Signed Chair

Dated this day of